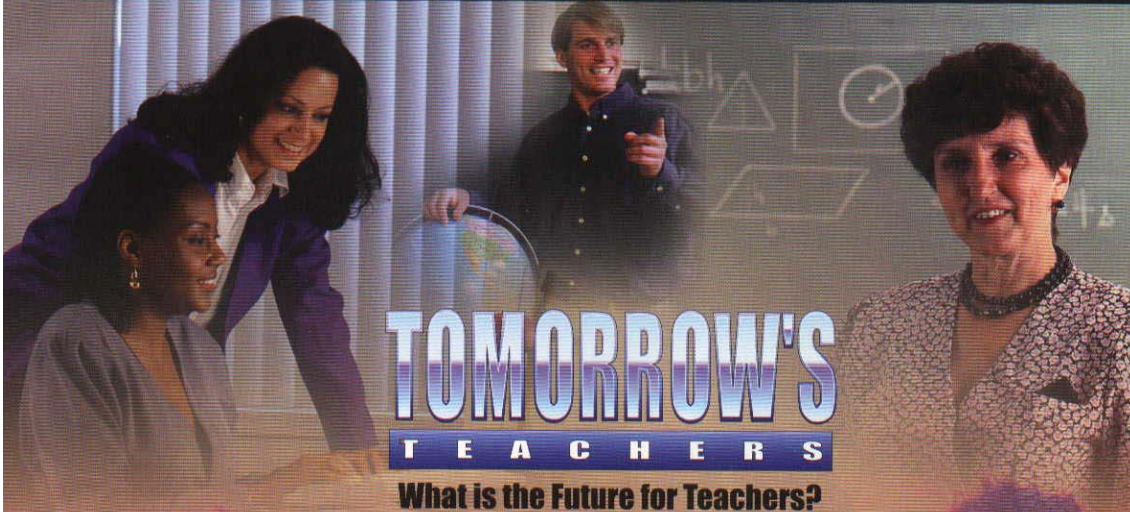


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TECHNIQUES

CONNECTING EDUCATION AND CAREERS



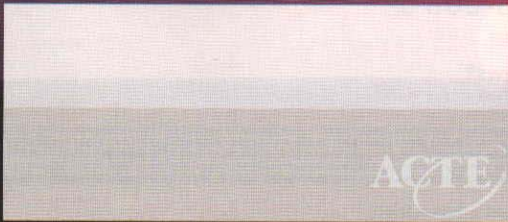
TOMORROW'S TEACHERS

What is the Future for Teachers?

**Filling the
Teacher Shortage:
Recruitment and Retention**

**Teacher Certification:
Meeting the Standards
Alternative Certification**

**Accountability
and Assessment:
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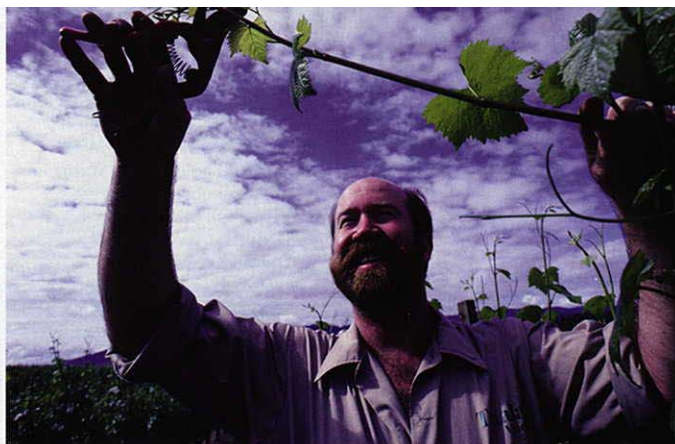
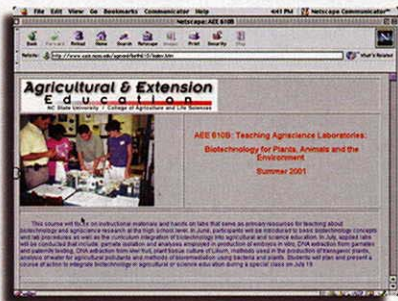


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**TOMORROW'S
TEACHERS**

Cultivating an Interest in Teaching Agriculture

Leaders of the agriculture education community, along with business and industry representatives, are looking for ways to increase the number of agriculture teachers. A new distance-learning program appears to be a leap in the right direction.

by Susan Reese, *Techniques* contributing editor

In November, 2000, a committee came together to discuss what they all agreed was the number one problem in agriculture education today—the teacher shortage.

The committee consisted of agriculture educators—both secondary and postsecondary—outside consultants, school board members, a teacher recruitment organization, and business and industry representatives. As they explored ways to increase the recruitment and retention of teachers of agriculture, they formulated a series of proposals that focus on the development of recruitment materials and the dissemination of those materials to potential teachers.

The committee proposed targeting those with degrees in agriculture, hoping to convince them to consider teaching. Another prospective pool of teachers includes those who were FFA officers when they were younger and are

now working in agriculture business or industry.

Yet another group the committee looked at was the paraprofessional model group. Someone in this group might have less than a baccalaureate degree, but could become an assistant teacher. While assistant teachers are needed to relieve some of the workloads of agriculture educators, the hope would be that they might be inspired to go back for their own degrees and become agriculture teachers themselves in the future.

Some surveys have shown that many parents remember their own agriculture educations favorably and view their own agriculture teachers in a very positive manner. However, they do not expect their own children to consider agriculture education as a career. Thus, it is apparent that there is a need to show the positive aspects of teaching agriculture to students while they are

the middle school and high school levels, if they are to even begin to consider it as a possible career.

Rosco Vaughn, executive director of the National Council for Agriculture Education, was one of those on the taskforce committee, and he notes that retention of our agriculture teachers is also an issue of concern. There is a high dropout rate in the first five years of teaching. Although, those who last past the first five years are likely to be teaching for the next 15 years.

Agriculture teachers tend to be younger when compared as a group to other teachers, and more are men—although women are increasing in number. Vaughn also sees a need for more minority teachers as role models for the many minority students in agriculture programs.

A recent FFA report based on research conducted through a Gallup Web-based instrument looks at the strengths of

successful agriculture teachers. In seven states—Colorado, Nebraska, North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, New York, and Montana—an online survey asked for the names of one or two well-respected teachers. The study then followed up with those top teachers who had been named to begin an identification process of the characteristics that are found in the best teachers. This data can be used to begin targeting potential teachers with those positive characteristics.

A LEAP into Teaching Agriculture

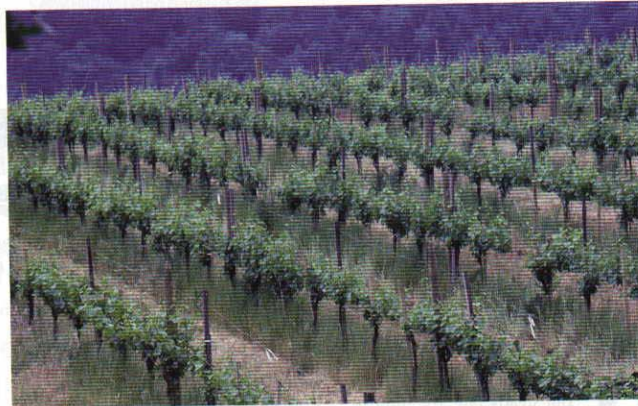
Licensure in Education for Agricultural Professionals (LEAP) is a new Web-based, lateral-entry teacher certification program in agriculture education scheduled to start for the fall semester. The program is being offered through North Carolina State University, but is available nationwide and is delivered through distance education technologies.

The LEAP program was started with a \$75,000 grant from the American Distance Education Consortium, and its goal is to increase the number of qualified agriculture education teachers in the nation. The American Distance Education Consortium, using Agricultural Telecommunications Program funds, is supporting the development of the program.

The requirements for admission to the program include a baccalaureate degree in agriculture, or an agriculture-related field, and a 2.5 GPA on all college-level work. An applicant must also submit three letters of recommendation and a written essay on why he or she wants to be an agriculture teacher.

Completion of the program requires 24 semester hours: five are agriculture education courses that are available online; two courses in psychology (adolescent and educational) may be taken online or at a university of the student's choice; and a practicum in agricultural and extension education must be completed as a teaching internship under the direction or guidance of an experienced agriculture educator.

Students who successfully complete the program will receive a class "A" teaching license from the state of North Carolina. This license is recognized by



“One of the key advantages of this program is that we have some of the top minds in the country helping to develop it.”

—Dr. Gary Moore of North Carolina State University, lead instructor of LEAP.

49 states (with Louisiana as the exception), all U.S. Territories, and all Department of Defense schools.

Although the program is based at North Carolina State University, six other universities are also involved in developing the course: the University of Delaware, the University of Missouri, Fort Valley State University, Wayne State University, the University of Arizona and Washington State University.

North Carolina State's Dr. Gary Moore, who is the lead instructor of LEAP, says, “One of the key advantages of this program is that we have some of the top minds in the country helping to develop it.”

In addition to the seven universities, the National FFA Organization and the National Association of Agricultural Educators are also collaborating on the project.

As evidence of the need for such a program, although it has not yet been publicized, applicants from Pennsylvania, New York and North Carolina have already applied to—and been accepted into—the LEAP program.

One of these applicants is a dairy farmer who made the decision to go into teaching when he learned of a position that would be opening up in a local high school.

Another was a woman with a degree in agricultural economics who had worked full time in swine production for two different companies until the birth of her child. When she returned to working part time, and her position was terminated due to a consolidation, she looked for a way to stay in agriculture. She turned to the LEAP program as a way to combine her interest in education with her background in agriculture to create a career for herself that would work well with the needs and schedules of her young family.

A third applicant has a degree in horticulture and her own nursery business. She had discovered a love of teaching by volunteering in her daughter's classroom. In her essay (a requirement for all applicants to the program) she writes of her love of agriculture with a beauty that is almost poetic. As she reflects on our relationship with nature in all of its mystery and beauty, her potential as a teacher becomes apparent. By sharing these ideas with her future students, she will help them look at agriculture with the same wonder and respect that she does. Some will surely be inspired to pursue a career in agriculture, and, hopefully, some of them may even be inspired to become the agriculture teachers of tomorrow. ☺